

NOAA's Habitat Focus Area in Miami



Background

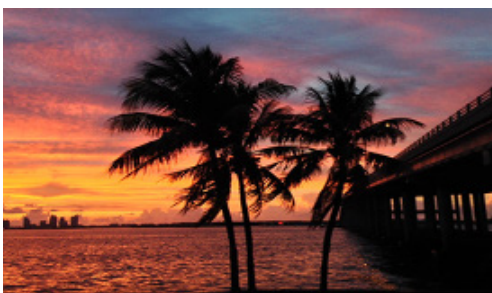
Habitat Focus Areas are targeted places where NOAA is collaborating with communities to measurably improve the environment through NOAA's mission of science, service, and stewardship.

Ten Areas for Action

NOAA selected ten Habitat Focus Areas (HFAs) nationwide to help communities protect and restore valuable natural resources that support local economies. Experts in the HFAs design and implement solutions to address threats to coastal habitats, working with partners to achieve shared conservation goals within a 5-year period. Using habitat science and best practices, HFAs demonstrate a concrete application of NOAA's mission.

NOAA Habitat Blueprint

Habitat Focus Areas are part of the Habitat Blueprint: a framework for NOAA to address the growing challenge of habitat loss. Visit the Habitat Blueprint website at <https://www.HabitatBlueprint.noaa.gov>.



Biscayne Bay welcomes you to Miami. Millions of people ride boats to its coral reefs, fish its shallow waters, and sunbathe on its beaches. However, runoff from farms and city streets flows through an extensive canal system into the bay and challenges its historically clear waters, threatening both ecological and human communities that depend upon the Bay. To address the challenges facing this region and its environment, NOAA and its partners are seeking solutions within the Biscayne Bay Habitat Focus Area in Florida.

Places ▶

Biscayne Bay is a shallow, clear water bay on the lower southeast Florida coast, adjacent to the Miami metropolitan area. The bay is home to many protected species, important recreational and commercial fishery species, and extensive mangrove shorelines, seagrass meadows, and coral reefs that serve as important habitat for sea life of all types. Visitors and residents use the bay for diving, snorkeling, kayaking and swimming, and commercial fishers target the bay's shrimp, lobster, crab and fish.

Biscayne Bay is one of ten NOAA Habitat Focus Areas across the U.S.

Tour all ten online at
[HabitatBlueprint.noaa.gov](https://www.HabitatBlueprint.noaa.gov)



Dislodged seagrass and sargassum amongst a fish kill composed mostly of toad fish.



The Habitat Focus Area is located on the lower southeast Florida coast.



University of Miami Urban Shark program insert an acoustic tag in a shark (photo credit: Robbie Roemer).

Issues ▶

Expansive algal blooms and seagrass die-offs have been occurring recently in Biscayne Bay due to degraded water quality conditions. New demands for freshwater and loss of critical groundwater storage upstream threaten to reduce the flow of freshwater into the Bay that is needed to maintain the proper salinity for the nursery grounds of fish, shrimp, and crabs. These issues threaten the continued existence of a clean bay that supports a vibrant fishing enterprise within its waters and onto the adjacent reef tract. Moreover, the ecological, aesthetic, and economic values of Biscayne Bay are not sufficiently recognized to adequately protect the bay from habitat degradation and exploitation pressures associated with urbanization and population increases.



Biscayne Bay Water Watch volunteers take water samples to monitor water quality in the Bay.

Priorities ▶

To improve management of its diverse habitats, the Biscayne Bay HFA team aims to achieve the following goals:

1. Improve water quality and address freshwater loss by improving the scientific basis for management.
2. Support and enhance recovery of protected species and sustainability of fishery species.
3. Moderate human impacts on species and habitat by increasing public awareness of the ecological, economic, and social benefits of the Biscayne Bay ecosystem.
4. Engage communities and increase citizen involvement in conservation activities.

To achieve these goals, NOAA is building on local momentum to protect and restore the region's habitats. The focus is a place—Biscayne Bay—but the real drivers of positive change are its people.

Partners ▶

A central team and partners coordinate on-the-ground and in-the-water efforts in Florida, and those partners include:

- Biscayne Bay Regional Restoration and Coordination Team
- Biscayne National Park
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- Tropical Audubon Society
- Clean Water Action
- National Parks Conservation Association
- University of Miami
- Florida International University
- Miami-Dade County
- Miami Waterkeeper

Plans ▶

For more background and resources about this Habitat Focus Area, connect with our page on the Habitat Blueprint website: [HabitatBlueprint.noaa.gov](https://www.HabitatBlueprint.noaa.gov).

Visit the story map for a visual tour of the HFA.



Mangroves and seagrass provide essential nursery habitats for the bay's fish (photo credit: Joe Serafy)

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